A

# SERMON

Preached before the

# KING

AT

# WHITE-HALL,

*April* the 12th 1674.

BY THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

# HERBERT,

Lord Biſhop of *Hereford.*

*LONDON:*

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## PHIL. 1. 21.

*For to me to live is Christ, and to dye is gain.*

HE that ponders well this saying, and the Author of it, will stand amazed at the strange and miraculous Operation of the Grace of God. *To me to live is Christ*, &c. I have no other thought, no other delight but Christ. As the Hart desireth the Water-Brooks, so longeth my Soul after Christ: My life without him is worse than death, and death with him is a gain beyond life. A very passionate and wonderful Affection! And who is this so passionately in love with Christ? 'Tis *Paul* the Apostle. Where's then the Wonder? Who more full of fervent Expressions towards Christ? Wherefore I tell you, 'tis *Saul* the Persecutor; he that but even now breathed nothing but Wrath and Vengeance against the Servants of Christ, now breathes nothing but the love of Christ. Is not this a wonderful change? But the manner of this change is yet more wonderful. For how was he reconcil'd,

and ſo firmly united to Chriſt? Was it after the manner of men, by Gifts, Honours, Advancements, Poſſeſſions, *&c.* This is our way, eſpecially with men of Spirit and Reſolution; violent and compulſary ways do but exaſperate and harden ſuch; and the Rule is general, *Oderunt quem timent: Men hate whom they fear.* But let us ſee how Chriſt deals with *Saul*, who was riding on, as furiouſly as *Jehu*, to *Damaſcus*, to oppoſe Chriſt, and deſtroy his Diſciples. Chriſt at firſt daſh tumbles him down to the Earth, ſtrikes him blind: And though afterwards he reſtored him his ſight, yet 'twas, as a Worldling would think, on very hard Conditions; to forſake all, Wealth, Honour, Friends, Country, and go preach the Goſpel to Infidels. And what's his Reward for his great Labour and Travel? Reproaches, Fetters, Whips, Stones. And is this the way to beget Love, or rather to convert great Love, into great hatred? Is it not then very true which the Lord ſaid, *Iſa.* 55. 8. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways?* Chriſt caſts *Saul*'s body to the Earth, but elevates his Soul to Heaven; covers his corporal eyes with blinding ſcales, but

but takes the darkening veil from his ſpiritual eye; diſcovers unto him the infinite Love and Goodneſs of his Saviour, whom he ſo blindly perſecuted; and giving him a raviſhing taſte of his Divine Sweetneſs, *Saul* is become *Paul*; the Perſecutor an Apoſtle; and ſo zealous a Diſciple, as he knows no other delight, no other joy, but Chriſt; for his ſake he gladly quits all, gladly ſuffers all. And now to him to live was Chriſt, and to die for Chriſt was a gain beyond all. *To me to live is Chriſt*, &c.

I have hitherto, by way of Preface, ſhewed you the wonderful love of St. *Paul* to Chriſt, which was not a languiſhing, idle Paſſion; but, *Amor efficax*: An efficacious operating Love; like active Fire, which converts every thing into the ſame nature: So this Divine Flame infuſed into the breaſt of *Saul*, converted the whole man into a new Creature. His earthly carnal Nature, is now become ſpiritual and divine; for ſo St. *Peter* expreſſes it, *That by Grace we are partakers of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. This ſeems to carnal men a thing wonderful and incredible; and yet we have daily before our eyes effects, in ſome meaſure,

meaſure, as wonderful; but the frequency of them takes away the wonder; and inſtead of admirable, renders them ſcarce conſiderable. Do not we ſee the ſame earth converted into various ſubſtances, by the diverſity of Seed caſt into it, and from thence ſpring up Corn, Tares, Flowers, Weeds, Graſs, Thiſtles, all out of the ſame Earth? Such is the efficacious power of the little Seed, as each one works ſuch a total change in the Earth, that our Brain would never conceive it poſſible, were not our eyes daily convinc'd of this Truth. Should any man come and tell us, That in the *Indies* 'tis common to file Iron into duſt, and to ſow it, and from thence in a ſhort time to ſpring forth a plentiful Crop of Iron-bars; ſhould not we eſteem him a large talking Traveller, and let this paſs for a mere Fable? And I pray why? Is it not more probable from Iron-duſt, to ſpring up Iron, than from a little, dry, black Kernel, to ſprout forth a tall, moiſt, green Twig; thence bud forth Leaves, then curious Bloſſoms, then lovely pleaſant fruit? Certainly this in appearance is a much more improbable change, and would be leſs credible, were it not daily viſible. So ſhould I come

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to ſome carnal, covetous Wretches, or to ſome debaucht luſtful Youths, and tell them, That would God be ſo gracious as to ſow in their corrupted earthly hearts, the Seeds of his Divine Grace, there would ſpring forth from thence moſt vigorous Branches, laden with rich and lovely Fruits of Temperance, Chaſtity, Meekneſs, Mercy, Charity; the money they now hug ſo cloſe, they would then ſcatter abroad among the poor; the Epicurean delights they now greedily hunt after, then offer'd, they would reject; the painted Beauty they now adore, they would then contemn; and in fine, it would work ſo ſtrange a Transformation in them, as to make them love Lowlineſs and Poverty, Hunger and Thirſt, Cold and Nakedneſs, Impriſonment and Stripes, any thing for Chriſt's ſake; and to rejoyce more in theſe, than in any carnal Pleaſure they ever enjoy'd. Think you, would they not rank me with the large talking Travellers, and think this the verieſt Fable in the World? No doubt on't. Yet, bleſſed be God, ſuch is the powerful Operation of his heavenly Grace, as in hath often wrought theſe wonderful Converſions in men of the fouleſt carnal temper;

*Zacheus* a Publican, to give half his Goods to the poor; *Matthew* the Publican, to forſake all; *Mary Magdalen*, the Sinner of the City, made the Saintly Penitent of the World; the furious Perſecutor *Saul*, the moſt fervent Apoſtle *Paul*; who did neither care to enjoy, nor ſo much as *know any thing, ſaving Chriſt and him crucified*, 1 Cor. 2. 2 And to gain Chriſt, *how readily did he quit all, even in the Infancy of his Converſion; yea, counted all but as dung, ſo he might gain Chriſt*: As dung, which with loathing, a man haſtily caſts from him; far from affectionately ſeeking them. This was the firſt ſtep of his Giant-pace, wherewith he began his courſe towards Chriſt. At the next ſtride he paſſes over Kindred and Friends, his Brethren according to the fleſh; they are all now become his Enemies, they daily plot miſchief, and muſter up all their Forces againſt him; and though Death, like a Cannon planted in the Rear, ſtands ready with open mouth to devour him, yet he is leſs terrified with that grim Viſage, than *Sampſon* with the Lyon, which he rent in pieces like a Kid, and found honey in the jaw thereof. So far was Death from being a terrour to St. *Paul*, that it was his

his delight, and could endure *to be killed all the day long*, as he expreſſes, *Rom.* 8. 36. And after all crys out, *We are more than Conquerers*: We not only overcome, but rejoyce in that we are thought worthy to ſuffer for Chriſt. Chriſt is the Prize his heart is ſet upon, to that he haſtens; Death it ſelf ſtops not his courſe. And now I come to that which far ſurpaſſes all I have yet ſaid: Such was the tranſcendent love of St. *Paul*, as that Chriſt's glory might be encreaſed, and many Souls gained unto Chriſt, he was content to give up, not only his Body unto Death, but his Soul alſo, even to eternal Death, and become *Anathama*, a Curſe for them. So high a pitch of Divine Love and Charity, as never any man before but *Moſes*, arrived unto, nor ever any man after as we find. *Hic terminus eſto.* Had it not been for this, the Jews might have out-bragg'd us with their great Captain and Deliverer from *Egypt*, *Moſes*, who for the good of his People, was content to be blotted out of the Book of Life. How would they have triumphed, could they have out-vyed us with a Saint of the Old Law; boaſting his Charity as far above any of ours, as *Saul* was by the head and ſhoulders above

all the People, and insultingly cry, *Toto vertice supra est.* But God hath taken away this Reproach from us; to whom he hath given not only a Chief Captain and Saviour Christ Jesus, far to surpass their Deliverer *Moses*; but another also to equal him, this great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. *Paul*, who deliver'd more thousands from a far more miserable Thraldom, captivated under Satan, and brought them to the heavenly *Jerusalem*: For the Salvation of whose Souls, he was as ready as *Moses*, to give up his own, and be blotted out of the Book of Life.

And now, if you please, we will erect here two Tabernacles, or two Pillars with a *Ne plus ultra*; one for *Moses*, and one for *Paul*. But I pray let us take care to build them according to St. *Paul*'s Directions, who would have all done to Edification; that these may be not only Trophies to them, but Instructions to us; to the end we may in some measure follow their godly example. For I fear that many look on these stately Pillars of God's Church, as we now a-days look on the Ancient Colossuses of *Egypt*. They at first,

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as *Pierius*, and other Writers relate, were erected full of Figures and Emblems, to teach the People Morality and Divinity; but this Emblematical Science being now antiquated and forgotten, we gaze on them as Wonders only, not one jot the better or the wiſer by them. And juſt ſo theſe goodly Pillars of the Church we much admire, but learn very little from them, and not at all endeavour to imitate them. That's beyond our power. And why beyond our power? Were not *Moſes* and *Paul* men of the ſame fleſh and blood with us? Ὁμοιοπαθεῖς, men of like paſſions, ſubject to the ſame infirmities with us? Did not St. *Paul* *Rom. 7.* 18. confeſs, That in *his fleſh dwelled no good thing*: And, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. did he not complain to the Lord, of a *Thorn in his fleſh, and Satan given to buffet him*; ſharp Temptations, and great oppreſſions? But what did the Lord anſwer him? *My Grace is ſufficient for thee.* Let not thy weakneſs make thee deſpond, and cauſe thy fall; My *ſtrength ſhall be made perfect in thy weakneſs*, and ſhall bear thee up againſt all oppoſition. And *Paul* confiding in this Promiſe of the Lord, was kept up, and overcame the Temptation, ſurmount-

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ed all Difficulties whatſoever; and no man ever met with more. Therefore in another place, *Phil.* 4. 13. he boaſts, *THAT through Chriſt he could do all things.* Why then may not other men of the ſame corrupt fleſh and weak infirmities with *Paul*, through Chriſt, do the ſame things which *Paul* did; *Do all things?* Is the Grace of God infeebled, that it cannot ſtrengthen? *Is the Arm of the Lord ſhortned, that it cannot ſave?* Or is the hand of the Lord cloſed, that he will not give? *Ask, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you*, Mat. 7. 7. ſaid the ſame Lord that enabled *Paul* to do all things. And can he deceive? Will He fail to make his Promiſe good? No certainly. But we do ask and ſeek, we daily pray, yet we continue as frail and weak as ever: And why? Becauſe we do not ask in Faith: We do not believe God is now ſo bountiful to confer ſuch wonderful Grace. Why not now? Is not *God the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever?* God is no Changeling; but we are, we are turned aſide from the holy Commandment; we do not love God with all our heart, nor with half of it, the World hath

hath three quarters at leaſt, God but a ſmall pittance; the Pomp and Glory of this World, the carnal deſires of the Fleſh, have wholly poſſeſt our hearts. Would God freely ask us, as he did *Solomon*, what we deſired; whether we would have Dignity and Wealth, or Grace and Vertue; whether we would be *Cræſus* or *Paul*; *Cræſus*, *Cræſus*, would be the loud cry, and carry it clear from *Paul* a hundred for one. Can we then expect that God will pour down his precious Grace on us, to make us *Pauls*, who care not to be *Pauls*; but would caſt away his heavenly Grace, for worldly Wealth? Really I fear there are not three perſons here of all this Aſſembly, that would be *Pauls* if they might. No, no, the Pleaſures, the Riches, which *Paul* chearfully abandoned, and counted as dung, we eagerly purſue, and highly eſteem; the Sufferings and Afflictions which he rejoyced in, we tremble at. We are a faithleſs and faint-hearted Generation, we will not *fight the good Fight of Faith*; there is not one ſpark of Chriſtian Ambition in us; we are no way worthy to bear the name of Chriſtian *Souldiers*, much leſs of *Captains* and *Pauls*; but deſerve rather to have

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our names quite blotted out of the Liſt. It was handſomly ſaid of *Henry* the Fourth of *France*, Did he know any Souldier in his Army, that did not hope to be a Captain; or any Captain, that did not hope to be Captain-General, he would preſently caſhier him. But all can't be Captains, 'tis true, but all may aim at it; and then as *Tully* ſaith, *Honeſtum eſt prima ſequentem, in ſecundis tertiiſve conſiſtere*: 'Tis honorable for him who aims at the Chief, if he arrive to the ſecond or third degree, and there ſit down. This was the way St. *Paul* took, as he tells us, *Phil.* 3. 13. *Forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the mark, for the prize of the high Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* Chriſt was the mark he aimed at, not that he hoped to come up fully to it, yet preſſed towards it. But alas! we have no ſuch aim, not a thought that way; we preſs not towards Chriſt our Captain-General, nor towards this Great Captain St. *Paul*, nor any thing like it; we had far rather be Pioneers, to dig and moyl in the Earth, to caſt up Banks, and raiſe Bulwarks of earthly Riches, that we may skulk under them, and avoid all Gun-ſhot; or be

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Wagon-Drivers to attend on the Carriages of Proviſion: Like the baſe Iſraelites, that drew back, and would not follow their Noble Captain *Moſes*; but ſtill hanker'd after the Fleſh-pots of *Egypt*, the Belly-comforts, as moſt of us do. Our Ambition reaches no higher than to arrive to a full meaſure of thoſe luſtful, ſordid delights, which the meaneſt and fouleſt Beaſts enjoy as fully as any man can do. What wretched thoughts are theſe for Men of Honour? The ſteam of theſe Fleſh-pots have ſo blinded our eyes, ſo ſtupified and beſotted our brain, that like men bereft of common ſenſe, we can't diſcern betwixt Light and Darkneſs, Vertue and Vice, Honour and Shame; but all is turn'd into a Chaos of Confuſion. For ſhame let us rouſe up our ſelves out of this deadly Lethargie, let us ſhew we have ſome ſparks of Honour and true Nobility in us. *Nobilitas ſola eſt atq; unica, virtus*: Vertue is the only true Nobility; a Heathen ſaid it. Conſider then the high price of our Calling, far above Heathens: We are called Chriſtians, *Sons of the Ever-living God, Fellow-heirs with Chriſt, Heirs of the Kingdom of Hea-*

ven: *Let us walk worthy of this Vocation where-with we are called; not in Rioting and Drunken-neſs; not in Chambering and Wantonneſs, not in Strife and Envy,* worſe then Heathens: But in Sobriety, Chaſtity, Charity, as good Chriſtians. If we can't walk with St. *Paul*, *Paſſibus æquis*, and keep up cloſe with him; yet let us, *Corde fervido*, haſten after, and preſs towards him. We ſerve a gracious God, who will accept of deſires for deeds: *A bruiſed Reed ſhall he not break, and the ſmoaking Flax ſhall he not quench*, but rather enflame it. Take a Candle newly put out, and yet ſmoaking, bring it near a flaming Candle, the flame of that will deſcend by the ſmoak of the other, and ſet it on fire: So would we but with hearts, like ſmoaking Flax, draw near unto God, his Holy Spirit would deſcend and ſet them a flaming. Oh then let us earneſtly *deſire* at leaſt, and *endeavour* with St. *Paul*, to live to Chriſt, and the infinite mercy of God will accept us, and enable us to live to Chriſt, and then doubtleſs our death will, like St. *Pauls*, be gain unto us; whereof I am now to treat, *To die is gain.*

Many in times of Paganiſm, conſidering the ſmall

ſmall and momentary pleaſures men enjoy in this life, the grievous and durable miſeries men ſuffer, all which death delivers them from; did thereupon conclude, death to be a great advantage, and a wonderful gain: θαυμάσιον κέρδος. So *Plato* in *Apo. Socr.* And *Cicero de Fin.* (who in all things followed *Plato*) called death, *Portum malorum, perfugium ærumnoſæ vitæ*: A Haven and Shelter from a tempeſtuous miſerable life. But *Zeno* the Stoick-maſter ſhall make anſwer to this; affirming, That there is no miſery in this life, but as we make it ſo; and that a wiſe Philoſopher is always happy in all conditions. And a Diſciple of his *Seneca*, diſcourſes the ſame at large, ſhewing how the riches of the mind are much improved by noble Sufferings; and theſe being of a far greater value than any earthly riches, the noble Sufferer is happy by enlarging theſe, though his Body or Eſtate ſuffer detriment. And then the Concluſion muſt be, That death can be no gain: Firſt, becauſe it deprives a man of life, which is a good thing of its ſelf; and ſecondly, it robs us of the opportunity to encreaſe the riches of the Soul, which

true Philoſophers improve by Sufferings. I doubt *Plato* and *Cicero*, and ſuch Academicks, would be foully puſled to anſwer from Natural Reaſon, theſe Arguments of *Zeno* and *Seneca*, and the reſt of the Stoicks. But I will leave them to canvas and juſtle one another in the dark; for truly I can't approve the Opinions of either party, or their Principles. For life being a natural pleaſing thing, I can't think it any gain to quit it, without the aſſurance of a better life, which Philoſophers had not: Nor can I think there's any happineſs merely in Sufferings, though ever ſo gallant. 'Tis true, a man ſhould bear them like a man, but this makes not a happy man, if no recompence follow. And though the Stoick *Anaxarchus* pun'd in a large Morter, affirm'd, he was there happy, and defied the Tyrant *Nicocrean*, ſaying, Πτύσον τὸν Ἀναξαρχον, Bruiſe the Caſe of *Anaxarchus*, thou canſt not bruiſe nor touch the hidden Jewel therein, my Soul: Yet I believe could he have leap'd out of the Morter, and eſcaped the Tyrant, he would not haſtily have leapt into it again to renew that happineſs. Theſe are brave flouriſhes of the

the Pen, whilſt men ſit at eaſe in their ſtudy; or a good face put on the matter, when a man is ſo fettered in an evil, as he ſees no poſſibility to eſcape; then 'tis better to brave it gallantly like a Lyon, than to dye ſneakingly like a Cur.

But let us now ſee St. *Pauls* Philoſophy, we ſhall find it much better: Thus far he agrees with the Stoicks, that there is no ſuch miſery in this life, but that men may receive benefit by it: *All things work together for good*, Rom. 8. 28. But to whom? To all men? No: But *to them that love God*; who for God's ſake bear it patiently, and by God ſhall be rewarded liberally; and *thus all things work together for good to them that love God*: But not to them who know not God, much leſs love him. For if there were no gracious God to recompence our Sufferings, no other life after this to receive the reward; then, ſaith St. *Paul*, *were we* Sufferers *of all men moſt miſerable*, 1 Cor. 5. 19. Sure very miſerable, to be *made the filth of the World, the off-ſcouring of all things*, 4. 13. And though St. *Paul* agrees likewiſe with *Plato*, That

That death is a wonderful gain: Yet not in it ſelf, as in putting off this houſe of Clay (for any houſe is better than no houſe;) but as death is a paſſage to a better houſe: *A houſe not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens*, 1 Cor. 5. 1. And he deſires to depart, not ſo much to be rid of the preſent Miſery, as to be with Chriſt the only true Felicity. And though life here be good; yet, *To be with Chriſt is far better*, *Phil.* 1. 23. Thus you ſee how much wiſer and better Chriſtianity is, than Heathen Philoſophy, which at beſt is but Gallant Folly.

But we have ſome Chriſtian Philoſophers, who endeavour to leſſen much our gain by death; telling us a fond Dream of their own Brain (*viz.*) The Souls ſleeping at death till the day of Judgment, and then to riſe again with the Body to receive the reward of good or evil. They were as good tell us in plain terms, the Soul dies with the Body; for this ſleep is ſo like death, as I know not how to diſtinguiſh it from Death. How a pure Spirit (as the Soul divided from the Body is) can fetch a ſleep of one or two thouſand years, I cannot underſtand, and I believe they as little. Let

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them ſhew us what kind of ſleep this is, and ſome warrant in Scripture for it, and then I ſhall willingly hearken to them, and ſubmit my Soul to ſleep with theirs, not otherwiſe. For I ſhall not eaſily quit the comfort St. *Paul* gives us at death, That we ſhall depart hence, and *be with Chriſt*, for which *he deſired to be diſſolved*; not to enter into ſo dead a ſleep, as would make his condition no better than of a dead block. He tells us alſo, *he was in a ſtreight betwixt two, Whether to ſtay and preach the Goſpel to others, or to depart and be with Chriſt, which was far better for himſelf.* Surely he that had ſo paſſionate a zeal to gain Souls unto Chriſt, would never have thought it far better to ſleep a thouſand years, than to gain a thouſand Souls. Thus to dye was a dull ſtupid gain, much diſagreeing with his Active Soul, and as much diſagreeing with the clear current of Scripture. What can be clearer than thoſe words of our Saviour unto the Thief on the Croſs? *This day thou ſhalt be with me in Paradiſe.* Which muſt needs be underſtood of his Souls living after the death of his Body on the Croſs. For ſure our Saviour took not the Thiefs Soul into

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to *Paradiſe* to ſleep with him, but to rejoyce with him there: Had Chriſt intended ſleep, he would rather have ſaid, This night thou ſhalt be with me in *Paradiſe*. I ſuppoſe the main cauſe that moves them to this ſleepy Imagination is, Their Wiſdom thinks it not reaſonable that the Souls of men ſhould at death receive the Recompence of Good or Evil, in Heaven or Hell, and thence come out again to the General Judgment; having before paſt their Particular Judgment. I wiſh theſe over-wiſe men would leave theſe matters to the Wiſdom of God to determine; for my part, I ſhall determine no more than the Scripture plainly declares, (*viz.*) That the Souls of good men after death have ſome happy being, where with St. *Paul* they enjoy Chriſt, frequently at leaſt, if not always: The Souls of wicked men ſome miſerable Being, at a vaſt diſtance from the godly, divided by an unpaſſable Gulf, as *Dives* was from *Lazarus*; but whether theſe places be the Heaven of heavens, and the Hell of hells, I will not now diſpute, but ſhall in a ſhort time certainly know: In the interim, I reſt

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ſatisfied with S. *Paul's* Aſſurance, That death will be a gain, and convey me to ſome place where I ſhall enjoy Chriſt my Bleſſed Redeemer.

We have yet another Generation of men, who call themſelves Chriſtians, and would be called Wits; but I can call them neither, they having no belief in the Promiſe of Chriſt for a future life, but make a mock of this as an idle Dream. 'Tis ſtrange that men, who have ſo high a conceit of themſelves, ſhould make uſe of their wit thus to debaſe themſelves. Certainly this is great folly. God hath made Man but *a little lower than the Angels*, by giving him an eternal Soul; but they by denying the Eternity of the Soul, make themſelves as low as Beaſts, their Soul dying with their Body, without hope of future life. If you ask them a reaſon for their Opinion, their Senſe is their Reaſon; they ſee no other life, therefore they believe no other. (Really I could never yet hear any thing elſe objected.) Thus they believe according to Senſe, and live according to Senſe; very Beaſts in all, but ſtupendious

Wits. 'Tis true, when a Man dies, and a Beaſt dies, we ſee no more of man remaining than of the Beaſt. But ſhall we be ſuch Beaſts, as to make no uſe at all of our Reaſon? Doth not our Reaſon evidently ſhew us, that there is a vaſt difference betwixt our Soul, and the Soul of Beaſts, by the many wonderful Arts and Sciences which man arrives unto, of which Beaſts are not capable in the leaſt degree? And we may farther urge the Metaphyſical Speculations and Spiritual Contemplations of the Soul, wholly independant of the Body; which ſtrongly proves the ſubſiſtency of the Soul independant of the Body, as the Learned well underſtand: For, an Action preſuppoſes the being of the Actor. But this is an Argument too Scholaſtick for this Aſſembly, therefore I ſhall not here enlarge upon it: Though methinks theſe men, who would be thought Maſters of Wit and Reaſon, ſhould be aſhamed of their Ignorance in this, the Maſter-part of Reaſon. But Beaſts they would be, and ſo let them be, unfit to conſort with knowing wiſe men; who in all Ages all the World over, had this belief of a future

ture life; which being ſo univerſal, muſt needs proceed from the inſtinct of Nature, which is nothing elſe but an inner light infuſed into the Soul of Man by God the Creator, together with a feeling and pleaſing expectation of future Felicity. Thus far Heathens went. But we Chriſtians have a farther and much clearer light from our Saviour Chriſt, who plainly taught this, and evidently confirmed it by innumerable Miracles which he did in his life, and chiefly by his riſing again after death, ſo fully atteſted. Do not the Laws of God and Man in all Nations, receive for truth whatever is witneſſed by two or three? But if twenty perſons affirm upon Oath, what they themſelves have ſeen, all twenty being men of unſuſpected credit; who then doubts the truth thereof? Had any one of theſe perverſe faithleſs Wretches an Eſtate to recover, witneſſed for them by twenty, or ten, or two ſufficient Witneſſes, and ſhould be deprived of it; would they not make great out-crys of Injuſtice? Have not we then moſt juſt cauſe to cry out againſt theſe unjuſt Judges, that would deprive us of our heavenly Inheritance, atteſted

for us by twenty, a hundred, five hundred moſt credible perſons, who all at once were eye-witneſſes of our Saviours being riſen from the dead; moſt whereof teſtified the ſame, not with Oaths, but with their Deaths, and joyfully died in full aſſurance of this heavenly Inheritance? And what theſe men were eye-witneſſes of, they declared unto others, and ſo from hand to hand conveyed it for many hundred years together, and in every year downwards from the Apoſtles, hundreds and thouſands continually atteſted the ſame, by ſuffering many grievous Torments, and cruel Deaths. Was there ever any thing ſo atteſted in the whole World? or was there ever any thing ſo perverſly, ſo madly denied? Are not theſe men, as St. *Auſtin* ſaith, Miracles of Unbelief? For really it ſeems impoſſible in nature, that men ſhould ſo unnaturally deny a thing atteſted by thouſands of reaſonable and credible men; ſo that to reject their evidence, is to reject the Evidence of Mankind. And that which makes theſe Infidels moſt notoriouſly ridiculous is, that they undoubtedly believe many things which have not the tenth part of

this

this Evidence, or ſcarce any at all. But as it is, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 11. *God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye*, and not believe the truth. Should I ask theſe men, what farther Evidence they would have for a future life? Doubtleſs they would require a ſight of ſome half a ſcore to come from the dead and aſſure them of it. Our Saviour ſaid it, and therefore I believe it, That *if they will not hear* Moſes *and the Prophets*, the Apoſtles and Martyrs, *neither will they hear*, *though one*, or ten, *roſe from the dead*. But put the caſe ſome ſhould come from the dead to aſſure them of another life, and theſe men having many children of their own, ſhould tell them what they ſaw and heard; and their children ſhould anſwer, They would not believe, unleſs they themſelves alſo ſaw and heard the very ſame: Would they not have great indignation at their childrens unbelief? No doubt on't. And yet their children have the ſame reaſon for themſelves to deny it. And ſo by their Rule, ſome muſt be daily coming from the dead into all parts of the World to ſatisfie men, or elſe no belief. Is not this a moſt extravagant thing?

We

We have had great patience to talk with theſe, ſo unreaſonable men, ſo long. I ſhall now make a ſhort Reflexion on what I have ſaid in this matter.

If we have not brought abſolutely convincing proofs for a future Life, yet ſure they are very probable proofs: So that conſidering our Aſſertion and Proofs, and their Denial and no Proofs, the Judgment ſtands fair for us. But the more to confute them, I will yield that we are upon equal terms; nay, what if I yield 'tis two to one on their ſide, and yet ſhew theſe great Wit-pretenders are Witleſs in their ways. I propoſe to them a Parable. A certain man brings them a Bottle of curious Wine to drink; there come in preſently three more, wereof one crys out, Sirs, take heed what you do, this man comes to poyſon you, I ſaw him put moſt deadly poyſon into the Bottle: The other two laugh at it as a Fable, affirming both ſtood by when the Wine was drawn, and they ſaw no poyſon put in. Some of my brave Youths ſay, Come, the Wine looks very clear, taſtes very pleaſant, away with theſe fooliſh fears, Let us drink and be merry.

merry. Others anſwer, Hold my Maſters, let us not be ſo mad as to venture our lives for a glaſs of Wine; though there be two Witneſſes to one, that there's no poyſon in it, yet this is but a Negative proof, poyſon might be put in and they not ſee it; and then, the loſs of our lives is an hundred to one more, than the gain will be in drinking it; the pleaſure is but for the twinkling of an eye, the loſs great and for ever. I beſeech you tell me, which of theſe talk Reaſon, which Madneſs? Is it not then far greater Madneſs, for the ſmall and momentary pleaſures of this life, to venture the loſs of an eternal Life, of unſpeakable Felicity? And not only ſo, but to plunge themſelves headlong into eternal miſery; and all this, not having two to one for them, but an hundred to one againſt them. If this be not deſperate Madneſs, I beſeech you tell me what is? Who can chuſe but ſadly lament the dangerous condition of theſe men? My only comfort is, That the mighty power of the Divine Grace *is able from ſtones to raiſe up children to Abraham.* And therefore I will never ceaſe to pray and hope, that God of his infinite Goodneſs

neſs and Mercy, will in his good time give a ſenſible Touch to their Faithleſs ſtony hearts.

And now for a Concluſion, I will in few words addreſs my ſelf to all you who have faith in the promiſe of Chriſt for a future life, and hope that death may be unto you gain. The day is at hand, when we are to celebrate the Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Saviour, which is the ground of this our hope, and raiſes up in us fervent deſires to live with St. *Paul* unto Chriſt, that we may die in Chriſt, riſe again and reign with Chriſt. And for the encouragement and encreaſe of your deſires, I beſeech you remember, that St. *Paul* was by nature of the ſame fleſh and blood with us, of the ſame infirmities and weakneſs, and of himſelf could do nothing, no more then we; but by Grace could do all things, and ſo may we.

I beſeech you alſo remember the faithful Promiſe of Chriſt. That if we ask, ſeek, and knock, this Grace will be given unto us. And never

never more seasonable than now to seek it; for you know, *Lent* is the holy time appointed by the Church for Fasting and Praying, and this ensuing Week is the Holy of Holies, and more especially requires it. How you have spent the former part, God and your own hearts best know; but if amiss, I, with St. *Peter*, beseech you, *That the time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in Lasciviousness, Lusts, excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquettings*, and such like, 1 *Pet.* 4. 3. Very unfit for Christians at any time, much more in the holy time of *Lent*. We must therefore, according to St. *Paul*'s Directions, *Ephes.* 5. 15. earnestly endeavour *to redeem the time past* by great Humiliation, and fervent Devotion, this Week yet to come; that so we may be meet partakers of the holy Mysteries, at the approaching Feast, and thereby partakers also of that powerful Grace which transform'd *Saul* into *Paul*; and will likewise transform us Sinners into Saints, if we receive those holy Mysteries worthily: But if unworthily, it will transform us great Sinners, into great Devils, *eating and drinking*

*our own Damnation,* which God forbid. I have heard of ſome that have made a Covenant with the Devil, and ſigned it with their own blood: Who doth not abhor the Fact? Surely then much more abhor to make a Covenant with the Devil to continue in ſin, and ſign it with the precious blood of Chriſt. The very thought of it is dreadful! Wherefore I moſt humbly and earneſtly beſeech you all with fear and trembling, to conſider the King of Glory, the Judge of quick and dead we are to receive into our breaſts, and that you would with repenting tears, ſo waſh and make it clean, with chaſtiſing Mortification ſo rub and poliſh; with fervent Love and zealous Devotion ſo deck and adorn it, that it may become a fit Tabernacle to receive the King of Glory, our Saviour Chriſt, and invite him *to come in and ſup with us, and we with him*, as it is *Revel.* 3. 20. That our Souls may be ſo refreſhed and ſtrengthened by this heavenly Food, that henceforth we may live in Chriſt, and Chriſt in us, and then we ſhall be ſure to die in Chriſt;

and

and that death will be unto us an unſpeakable gain, conveying us from a World of Miſery, to a Kingdom of everlaſting Glory; which Chriſt hath faithfully promiſed us, and God of his infinite Mercy will give us. And therefore unto him be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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*FINIS.*

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